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**OFFICE OF PETITIONS  
ON PETITION**

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In re Application of  
Sang G. Song  
Application No. 09/422,025  
Filed: October 20, 1999  
Attorney Docket No.

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed May 29, 2002, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply in a timely and proper manner to the non-final Office action mailed May 15, 2001, which set a statutory period for reply of three (3) months from its mailing date. Extensions of time were available pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a). No reply was received within the allowable period, and the application became abandoned on August 16, 2001. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on March 26, 2002.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)<sup>1</sup> must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,<sup>2</sup> unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3) above.

As to item (3), the showing of record is not sufficient to establish to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a).

**The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.**

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily

<sup>1</sup> As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."<sup>3</sup>

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."<sup>4</sup>

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"<sup>5</sup>

"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgement for that of the agency."<sup>6</sup>

### The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."<sup>7</sup>  
The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"<sup>8</sup> Nonawareness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute."))

<sup>4</sup>Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup>Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

<sup>6</sup>Rav v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

<sup>7</sup>Id.

<sup>8</sup>See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

<sup>9</sup>See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawareness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.



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